

## Fur Farming Citizen Engagement Toolkit

This toolkit provides all the information you need to meet with your Member of Parliament (MP) and take a stand against fur farming in Canada. Countries around the world have banned fur farming and it's time for Canada to join them. For this to happen, elected representatives need to hear from their constituents that this issue matters to them.

**This is where you come in: arrange a meeting to speak with your Member of Parliament and be part of the generation that makes fur farming history in Canada.**

### Background

Fur farm operations confine wild animals in small, wire cages before they are killed and skinned for their fur. Mink are the most commonly farmed animal in Canada, followed by foxes. Other fur-bearing animals such as chinchillas and rabbits are also farmed for their fur. Fur farms are large industrial operations where as many as tens of thousands of animals are kept on a single farm. The end product, fur pelts, are sold on the domestic or international markets to be used in the luxury fashion industry.

Fur farming received international attention during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the susceptibility of mink to the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Many countries experienced disease outbreaks on mink farms, including Canada. In British Columbia, three mink farms had COVID-19 outbreaks. In response, the Provincial Health Officer ordered a moratorium on mink farming in July 2021 due to its danger to public health. In November 2021, the BC government announced it will ban mink farming, the first province in Canada to do so. The BC government provided supports to fur farm workers to obtain skills training for employment in the greenhouse sector.

Several countries moved to end fur farming during the COVID-19 pandemic, including Italy (2021), France (2021), Estonia (2021), Ireland (2020), and the Netherlands (2020).

On February 8, 2022, Private Member's Bill C-247, *An Act to prohibit fur farming*, was introduced in the House of Commons by MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith.<sup>1</sup> If passed, this bill would ban fur farming across the country and move Canada in line with numerous other countries that have already ended fur farming. Legislators now need to hear from Canadians that they are calling for change.

### Arrange a meeting with your MP

Your Member of Parliament (MP) represents your interests at the federal level, regardless of their party affiliation or how you voted. They need to hear about issues that matter most to you. It is especially important to advocate for the individuals most negatively impacted by fur farming - the animals - as they aren't given a voice at the table, and they need people like you to step up for them.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/bill/C-247/first-reading>

## 1. Contact your MP

To find your MP and their contact information enter your postal code or riding on this page:

<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Members/en/search>

Either call your MP's constituency office or send an email to request a meeting about fur farming. Provide brief background information about this issue, explain why it is important to you, and request a meeting to discuss it in more detail. Be friendly, respectful, and polite in your communications.

Ensure to include your name, phone number, municipality, and postal code during your initial contact email so that your MP knows you are their constituent.

## 2. What to communicate to your MP

Go into your meeting knowing that the understanding of fur farming will vary significantly from one MP to another. Some might know a lot about fur farming already, others may not know it exists in Canada. What's important is that you communicate why this issue matters to you. You don't have to be an expert on the topic; you should explain what it means to you and that you want to see change. If you would like to discuss more detailed information about fur farming in your meeting, you may reference the quick facts and talking points below.

## 3. What to ask of your MP

Before you conclude your meeting, ask your MP for the following:

1. Ask for their support for a nationwide ban on fur farming.
2. Ask your MP to reach out to the Minister of Agriculture and recommend that the government begin the process to phase-out fur farming and provide support to workers to help them transition to safe, sustainable, and ethical sectors.

### QUICK FACTS

- 1,011,600 mink and 2,050 foxes were killed on fur farms in Canada in 2020.<sup>2</sup> (More recent data has not been made available by Statistics Canada)
- According to the 2021 census, there are 79 mink farms and 18 fox farms in Canada. In 2021, there was at least one fur farm operating in every province.<sup>3</sup>
- Nova Scotia and Ontario have the largest fur farming sectors.
- Countries that have banned fur farming include: Ireland, Italy, France, Estonia, Ireland, Slovakia, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, Czech Republic, United Kingdom, Austria, Netherlands, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>4</sup>
- Countries that have introduced legislation to ban fur farming include: Bulgaria, Lithuania, Montenegro, Poland, Latvia, Spain, and Ukraine.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3210011601>

<sup>3</sup> <https://thefurbearers.com/blog/2021-census-fewer-than-100-fur-farms-left-in-canada/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.furfreealliance.com/fur-bans/>

# Talking Points

## FUR FARMING IS CRUEL TOWARDS ANIMALS

- Animals are kept their entire lives in small wire cages, unable to express their natural behaviors.
- Mink are killed in gas chambers and foxes are killed by anal electrocution. Both of these methods are industry standard and listed as requirements under national guidelines developed by the National Farm Animal Care Council.<sup>1</sup>
- Fur farming is a cruel practice that harms and kills animals for unnecessary luxury fashion products.

## FUR FARMING IS A PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT

- Mink are susceptible to the virus that causes COVID-19. This can lead to the development of mink-related variants and undermine the effectiveness of our current vaccines.
- Outbreaks of the virus on mink farms can lead to spillover of the virus to wild animal populations.
- Mink farms aren't safe working environments for workers, as the virus can be transmitted to workers from infected mink.

## FUR FARMING NEGATIVELY IMPACTS THE ENVIRONMENT

- Fur farming is unsustainable and harms the environment, especially as it relates to waste runoff from farms.
- Mink and foxes are kept in cages in long rows of open sheds, where their excrement and other waste falls below their cages.
- This waste is carried into the natural environment and nearby watersheds.
- Fur farming has been linked to increased levels of pollution in Nova Scotia lakes where there are high concentrations of mink farms.<sup>2</sup>

## INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES

- Fur farming is a colonial practice that emerged in Canada after European contact.
- The industrial farming of wild animals for luxury fashion products goes against Indigenous values.
- The Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs has called on the BC government to end fur farming, and in September 2021, passed resolution 2021-62, Support for Phasing Out Industrial Fur Farming in BC.<sup>3</sup>

## PUBLIC OPINION AND SOCIAL NORMS

- A 2022 Research Co. survey found that 74% of Canadians would support a nationwide ban on fur farming.
- Majorities of Canadians who voted for any of the three major parties in the 2021 federal election are in favour of a ban on fur farming:
  - > 80% among those who supported the New Democratic Party (NDP).
  - > 73% among those who backed the Liberal Party.
  - > 71% among those who cast ballots for the Conservative Party.
- Societal values have shifted away from fur.

## SOLUTIONS

- Fur farm workers should be supported to transition into safe, environmentally sustainable, and ethical sectors.
- A model example is a government supported project in British Columbia that helps agricultural workers obtain employment in the greenhouse sector. Through this project, skills training is being offered to former mink farm workers to help them transition from fur farming to greenhouse work.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nfacc.ca/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/mink-farms-likely-polluted-lakes-study-finds-1.1238053>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.ubcic.bc.ca/ubcic\\_calls\\_for\\_phasing\\_out\\_of\\_fur\\_farming](https://www.ubcic.bc.ca/ubcic_calls_for_phasing_out_of_fur_farming)

<sup>4</sup> <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022SDPR0019-000604>